

The Enhanced, Traditional Downtown

Downtown Sunnyvale possesses a mix of assets that offers a variety of possibilities for defining its downtown identity. This mix creates a multi-dimensional commercial core that can provide city residents with a complete range of goods and services associated with traditional downtowns.

Several **districts** exist within the downtown, each with its own unique flavor and mix of uses. **Mathilda Avenue** and **El Camino Real** are important arterials that connect with broader, regional vehicular transportation corridors such as US 101, and create for the downtown a sense of arrival and address. **Caltrain** forms the northerly boundary of the downtown and provides a strategically located station stop for local commuter traffic. A **civic center**, which includes a city hall, a police facility, and a main library, adjoins the westerly boundary and provides important services for residents. **Town Center Mall** provides a variety of local and regional retail uses. Three full service **department stores** anchor the mall and offer the city a unique asset, as few downtowns possess department stores. **Murphy Avenue** concentrates a variety of local restaurant uses in a pleasant, tree-lined environment, and provides the stage for a weekend market and periodic community events. A **City plaza**, located on Evelyn Avenue near the commuter train station, will provide the downtown with an important open space resource and another formal gathering place for events. A variety of **housing** types, including low-density single-family neighborhoods and higher density multi-family neighborhoods surround the commercial core. **Surface parking lots** and **structured parking decks** are generally well placed throughout the commercial core and support retail, entertainment, and restaurant uses.

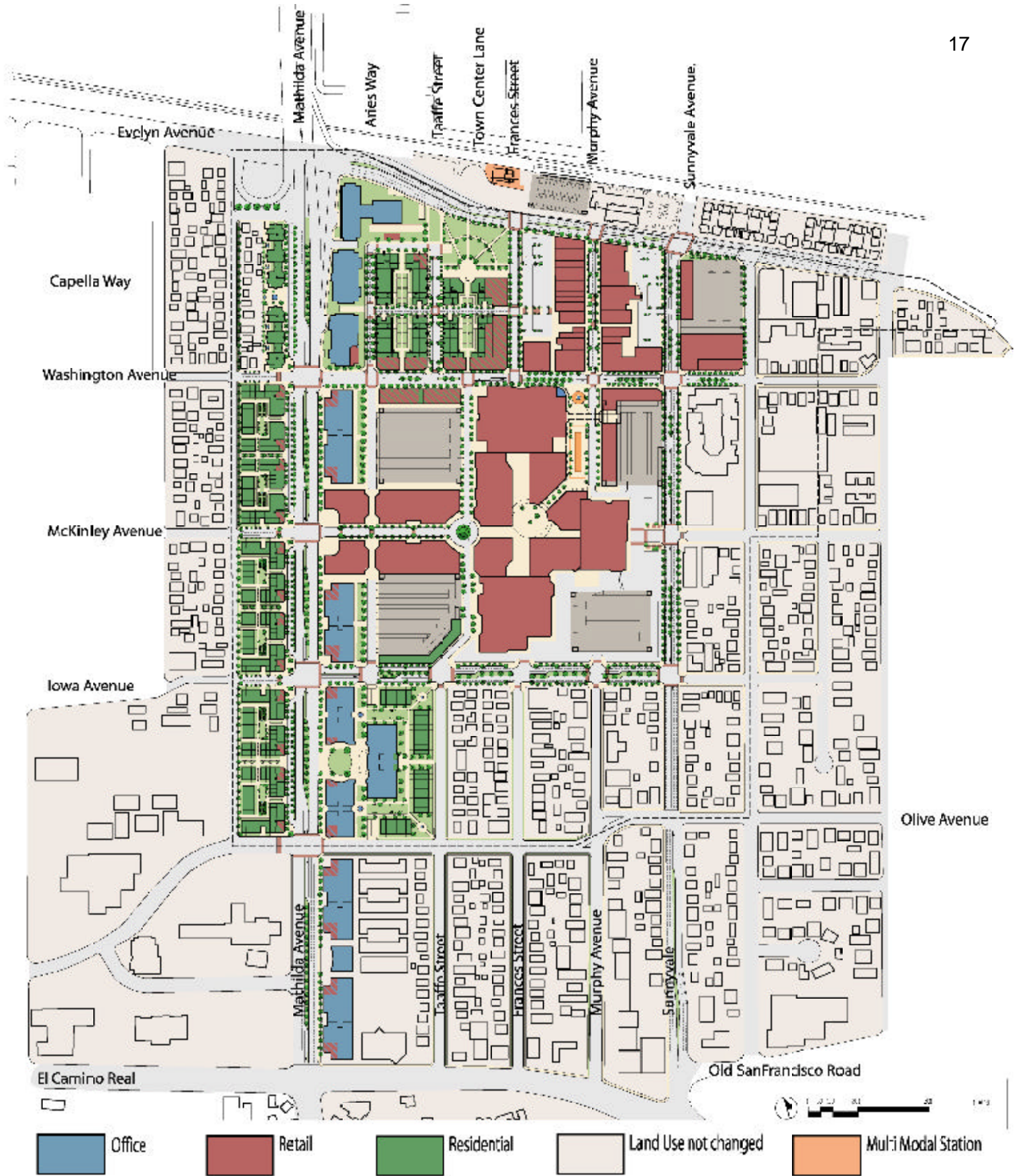
Several **bus routes** serve the commercial core and stop near the train station, creating a **multi-modal transportation facility**.

Sunnyvale's downtown also possesses qualities found in both small-town village centers and mid-size urban commercial cores. Organized by district, the downtown's village-like character derives from its tree-lined "main street," "Murphy Avenue", its city hall and library set in a village green, and its local commuter train station. Its more urban commercial core character derives from its regional boulevards, "Mathilda Avenue and El Camino Real", its mid-rise office buildings, "Mozart project", and its regional mall, "Town Center Mall".

Given this unique character, the Urban Design Plan provides the framework to capitalize on and strengthen downtown Sunnyvale's assets. The vision process helped to identify and establish several urban design goals that set the direction for implementing the vision. These urban design goals likewise helped to establish specific development strategies for the downtown, both on private development sites and in the public domain. Vision points, urban design goals, and specific development strategies all reinforce the big picture idea that Sunnyvale's downtown has the potential to be a traditional downtown, containing a rich mix of activities and uses, with a regional and national retail mix balanced by thriving local independent businesses and merchants, set in a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the Sunnyvale Urban Design Plan





Urban Design Plan

Figure 3.1

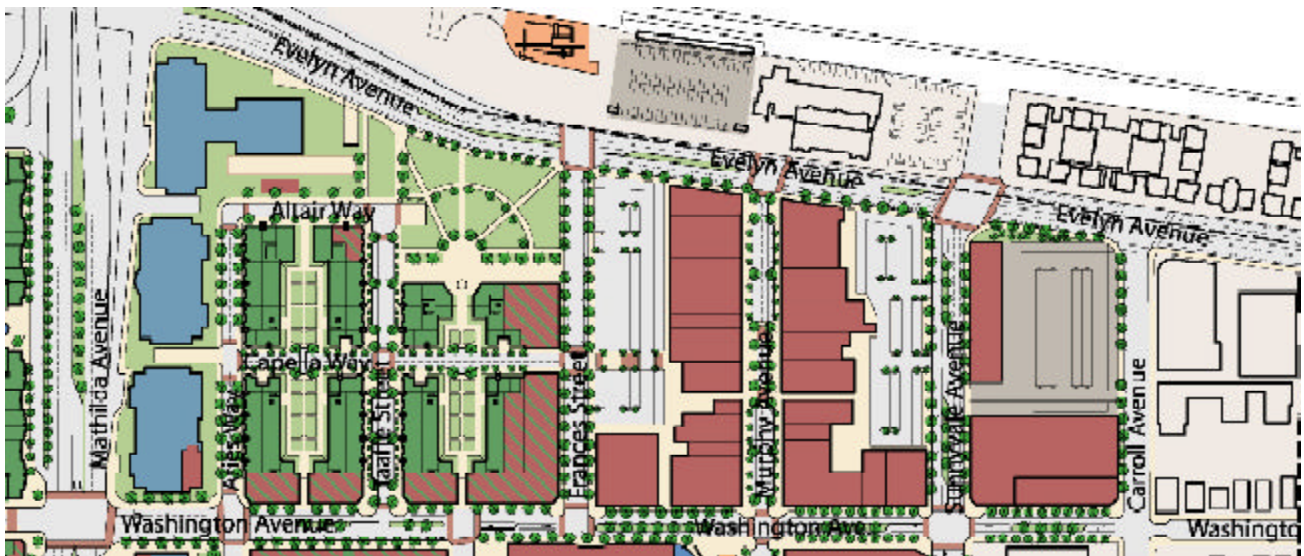
Urban Design Goals

Starting with the vision, twelve urban design goals were identified to establish the framework for improvements in the downtown.

Capitalize on Murphy Avenue. Murphy Avenue is a unique community asset, containing thriving local businesses and functioning as an important gathering place for local residents. Recent landscape, streetscape, and façade renovations have created a friendly, intimate, urban place. Recommendations for development within the downtown recognize and improve upon this asset.

Promote Local Businesses and Merchants.

Local independent businesses and merchants give Sunnyvale's downtown a distinct character and unique flavor. Recommendations for development within the downtown identify and create sites for local independent retail and entertainment venues.



Retail north of Washington Ave. should be predominately independent businesses.



Protect and Enhance Existing Neighborhoods. Sunnyvale's residential districts help establish the downtown's unique character. Recommendations for downtown traffic and parking strategies focus on softening potential adverse impacts on existing single family and low-density residential neighborhoods surrounding the commercial core.

Improve Town Center Mall. Anchor stores, uncommon in modern downtowns, and other mall tenants in Town Center Mall provide a strong retail base upon which to improve. However, the fortress-like massing of the mall is incompatible with the historic city street fabric and disconnects circulation in public rights-of-way throughout the downtown. Recommendations for redeveloping the mall focus on improving connections into and through the mall, and on improving the quality of the tenant mix and the mall's physical environment.



Existing neighborhoods contribute a strong sense of community.

Promote a Variety of Transportation Modes. The downtown is served by the Caltrain commuter rail system and VTA bus service. Employees of downtown businesses and visitors to downtown establishments do not need to rely on private vehicles. Recommendations include incorporating planned Caltrain station improvements and the bus transfer facility on Frances, and bicycle lanes on Evelyn, Iowa, and Sunnyvale to make the downtown a multi-modal hub.

Manage the Transportation System.

Moving people and goods in the downtown is key to economic vitality. Recommendations include using the latest traffic signal control equipment and parking guidance systems to reduce congestion and improve the roadway system's efficiency.



Improvements for the mall include improving connections into and through the mall.

Improve Street Character – Boulevards.

Mathilda Avenue has the potential to become a boulevard establishing a sense of arrival, address, and creating an awareness of the broader downtown district. Recommendations for development along Mathilda address improving the quality of its pedestrian environment and reinforcing its potential as the downtown’s “front door” by concentrating office uses on the east side adjacent to existing commercial use, and residential uses on the west side adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods.

Improve Street Character – Avenues and Streets.

Sunnyvale Avenue, Washington Avenue, and Iowa Avenue are key vehicular and pedestrian linkages that function as important feeders into the downtown. In addition, the proposed loop ramp from southbound Mathilda Avenue to Evelyn Avenue will allow Evelyn to serve as another important feeder downtown. Recommendations for development along these and other streets address improving the quality of their pedestrian environment and their potential as vehicular feeders to parking resources.



Proposed improvements to Mathilda Avenue reinforce its potential as the downtown’s “front door”.

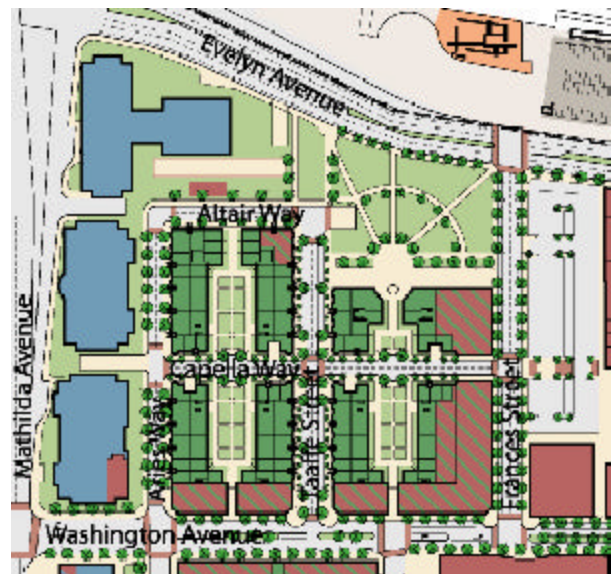


Identify Potential Development Sites. Town and Country Village, Town Center Mall, the Sunnyvale/Carroll area north of Washington, and sites along both the east and west sides of Mathilda Avenue are important potential development sites. Recommendations focus on near-term and long-term market opportunities for these sites.

Promote Retail Opportunities. There will be a continuing and growing demand for service, community, and sub-regional retail development in the downtown. Recommendations for near-term retail strategies focus on strengthening and improving Town Center Mall and Washington Avenue.

Promote Downtown Housing Opportunities. The demand for in-town living in Sunnyvale remains high, evidenced by the success of the recently developed Villa del Sol and Cherry Orchard housing projects. Downtown residential population is a potential source of investment and support. Recommendations recognize the importance of housing in the downtown mix and focus on strengthening the sites bordering the western side of Mathilda Avenue and sites north of Washington Avenue.

Promote Office Opportunities. There will be a demand for multi-story office buildings in the future. Recommendations recognize the importance of office use in the downtown mix and focus on creating future receiver sites bordering the east side of Mathilda Avenue.



Recommendations recognize the importance of housing in the downtown and focus on sites north of Washington Avenue.